

NFCorp justifies its expansion into Singapore
The Malaysian Insider
March 1 , 2012

KUALA LUMPUR, March 1 — The National Feedlot Corporation (NFCorp) said it intends to sell its beef products abroad as the local market was too small and could not support the firm's intended output, after opposition officials exposed a supermarket venture linked to the company's directors.

NFCorp chairman Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail explained that the publicly-funded cattle-rearing firm was building up the market in Singapore and would likely do the same in Indonesia in future.

File photo of the NFC in Gemas which was first mooted as a high-impact project under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

He said this was necessary as the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) would produce 78,000 tonnes of beef by 2015 once its abattoir was operational, more than what the Malaysian market needed. The NFC was first set up in 2007 to provide food security and import substitution for beef from abroad.

"When we have this many tonnes of beef, the Malaysian market will not buy everything so we have to find other places to sell," he told The Malaysian Insider yesterday.

"We don't have a contract with the government (to sell beef)... We only have a contract to slaughter the cows. Where do you think we are going to sell this?"

Salleh was responding to claims that he and his family had used NFCorp's RM250 million federal loan as leverage to obtain loans from two commercial banks to open a supermarket in Singapore.

However, he declined to comment on his family's alleged links to Farmhouse Supermarkets, only saying that NFCorp would issue a statement soon to "explain in the proper context".

PKR strategic director Rafizi Ramli alleged yesterday that Farmhouse Supermarkets would be the anchor tenant at The Star Vista mall in Singapore, a claim mall owner CapitaMalls Asia denied today.

Rafizi later issued a correction, stating that he had mixed up The Star Vista with the nearby Rochester Mall, where Farmhouse Supermarkets is said to be the largest tenant on the second floor.

Salleh also said yesterday the NFC was intended to support local cattle farmers and grow the Malaysian beef market, and stressed that no one should be opposed to such socio-economic development.

"Why is Rafizi so against it? If we are going to buy from farmers and sell to people all over the world, what is wrong with that?" he said, adding that the project was still on-track to

achieving its goals.

The NFC was first mooted as a high-impact project under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) and aims to turn Gemas in Negri Sembilan into Malaysia's Beef Valley and cut down foreign beef imports.

NFCorp, which supervises the NFC, hit the headlines after it made it into the Auditor-General's Report last year, and has continued to hog the limelight after it was linked to minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Jalil.

Salleh, a former food science head at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM), is Shahrizat's husband. He runs the company with their three children.

PKR has made several claims of abuse over NFCorp's federal loan involving over RM62 million spent on land, property and other expenses unrelated to cattle raising.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin announced last month that Putrajaya would appoint an auditor to scrutinise NFCorp's books in light of accusations made against the company.

Opposition parties have called on the government to freeze NFCorp's assets to stop the company from using more public funds while the probe was being carried out.

Commercial crimes investigators said last week they will recommend to the Attorney-General's Chambers that all NFCorp directors be charged with criminal breach of trust.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/nfcorp-justifies-its-expansion-into-singapore/>